

8M2023

OUR
TIME



OUR
STRIKE

tools for thinking &
mapping the feminist strike



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time of the feminist strike

LMD

“There is no time to strike” is the immediate response, when I invite my friends to the Feminist Strike. “Who will fix the food, who will change the sheets, who will clean the kitchen, who will take care of my kids, my parents, the kids down the street, the dog, etc., while I go on strike, or even when I go to the assembly to plan for the strike?”

We—women, trans, queer folks, feminized bodies and subjects—already, in our everyday lives, make time multiply, we cook, we clean, we care, we teach, we think, we write, all at the same time. It is not only that we have multiple working days—the work outside the home (which of course is now inside of the home for many of us), the work in the home, the work in the community or the political organization—but that we do all of it simultaneously, our multiple working days overlap, at the same time.

The feminist strike puts a stop to all of these multiple times, the proliferation of tasks and timelines, to-do lists and shopping lists, the multiple, simultaneous, working days, that go on without stop all day everyday. In the feminist strike: we stop. We stop cooking, cleaning, teaching, writing, serving, caring for others and thinking about others’ problems. We stop fulfilling gender roles, we stop inhabiting certain positions, we stop being submissive, we stop sacrificing ourselves, we stop being victims. We stop letting our time be defined by their clocks, their deadlines, their curfews.

Through the feminist strike, we produce our own time. We have no time, but we make it, for ourselves. We rework, collectivize, redefine all our tasks, reshape the fabric of time itself until we make our own time. First in the process to build the strike, in each assembly, to build the web, the social and community fabric that makes the strike possible, we produce a time that is dedicated to organizing ourselves and nothing else. A time for all those things we had no time for: to find each other, to grieve together, to celebrate together, to create a common space and time.

Then, in the strike itself we stop all time, except for our own, a collective self-defense of our own time. Estamos para nosotras y nosotres. We are here for ourselves. We say, si nuestras vidas no valen, produzcan sin nosotras. If our lives don't matter, if you continue killing, raping, assaulting, harassing us, then, well, produce without us. So, we show, that they need us, they need our labor, in all its different forms, and they need our time.

In the strike, we remove ourselves, even if only briefly, from the systems and relationships that cause us harm, those that exploit us, that extract value from our every act and relationship, that shape us down to our very desires.

But the strike is also a moment of building that "we" which does not exist before the strike but is constructed in that very process of building the strike. It is in this sense that the strike is a moment not only of refusal but also of joy. A joy that escapes the machines of capture because it is so untimely. Yet the experience of that joy stays with us, endures over time.

But the time of the feminist strike is not only that moment of interruption and disruption exercised in the strike itself. The time of the feminist strike reverberates in all those areas of life/work and work/life, in all those multiple-simultaneous working days.

The time of the feminist strike is not the time of politics as we know it. It is not the time that waits for the right moment or that fits into electoral schedules, it is not the time that follows the timeline that we saw in some other revolution some time ago. The time of the feminist strike insists that the time for change is right now, whenever that time might be, whether or not it is convenient, whether or not it is our turn, whether or not the necessary preconditions exist. It is a time that simultaneously acts on multiple timescales, looking toward the past and the future while also insisting on the present, simultaneously on all of those overlapping timelines in which we work and exist. And, in doing so, the feminist strike opens up the question of what we will make of this new time that we have produced, what we will do with our time now that we have stopped.





¡VIVAS, LIBRES
Y DESENDEUDADOS
NOS QUEREMOS

NOS MUEVE
EL DESEO
DE UNA MEJOR
VIDA

taking back our time and the streets

VERÓNICA GAGO

When the pandemic and its disrupted times, which have led to more paid and unpaid work, mixed with the hardships of illness and death, seem to crush and flatten time, feminism speaks of the future. Last November 25 two banners circulated that are noteworthy because of their shared verb. Colectiva Feminista en Construcción from Puerto Rico dropped an enormous banner from a bridge that said: "Better times are coming, we are building them." Meanwhile, the 8M Coordinator of Chile waved purple handkerchiefs with the slogan: "The feminist strike is coming. 8M." Not allowing the future to roll over you, but rather actively producing the future starting from the here and now is, undoubtedly, a show of political strength. This is truer than ever in a moment when producing the time to organize ourselves – and, thus, putting a stop to the endless flow of tasks and worries, collectively reflecting on and evaluating where we are headed – is so difficult.

In Argentina, the meetings, assemblies, and coordinating networks started weeks ago. Are we returning to the streets? Did we ever leave? Some conversations revolve around that axis. Representing the union movement, Ama Lemos, Interior Secretary of the Unión Obrera Ladrillera de la República Argentina [Bricklayers' Union of the Argentine Republic] says: "We never left the streets because we were putting our bodies on the line in other ways, starting from other places, after two

years we really need this mobilization. Coming together and mobilizing seems essential to us and it will allow us to mark and expand a feminist agenda over time. Every 8M enables us to generate more organization.”

Dina Sánchez from the UTEP [Union of Popular Economy Workers] makes a similar diagnosis: “The pandemic both stopped us and, yet, we never stopped showing up. ” Sánchez and UTEP are perfect examples of just that point, serving others throughout Covid, while also forcefully repelling the plans of politicians who would “convert” welfare benefits into “genuine” work. “They still think that care is not work,” she adds. Johana, from the Garganta Poderosa and organizer of the Casa de la Mujer de la Villa 31 [a women’s organizing space in one of Buenos Aires’s shantytowns], emphasizes the importance of demanding wages for community workers, arguing that nobody asks who cooks the tons of food distributed by community soup kitchens. Talking about what happened during the pandemic, as we do in every feminist gathering as we return to in-person meetings, means collectively listing what was done, where we were, and, in turn, narrating why it is necessary to come together again in collective mobilization.

From the city of Neuquén, Ruth Zurbriggen, from La Revuelta collective, which has been meeting to plan the 8M, explains: “We have to reconstruct the fabric, this has to be part of what motivates us to take the streets on March 8 with this powerful web that, as feminists, we know how to produce, in order to intergenerationally insist on everything that they owe us.” If, during these years, the strike was a process that took on multiple forms, today that dynamic is impacted by overburdened

domestic spaces, bus cards without credit, an exhaustion caused by the never ending need to address everyday emergencies and juggle multiple jobs and tasks to make ends meet. "We have to intervene in the midst of a debate that seems poisoned by the payment of the external debt, a debt that will not be paid by those who fled the country with millions of dollars from the loan," Ruth adds.

Debt is at the center of many of the debates this March 8 in Argentina. "The debt is owed to us" is the slogan that has been used since 2020 to connect labor, territorial, and economic demands with calls against violence, building on the slogan used in 2018: "we want to life, free and debt free." However, today, in the midst of negotiations with the IMF, it is more urgent than ever. Luci Cavallero, a member of the Ni Una Menos collective, clarifies: "The denunciation of the external debt is not new. Since 2018, when Mauricio Macri's government led us to the worst process of indebtedness in our country's history, feminist movements have argued that the external debt is a war against the possibility of living a life free from violence, against the possibility of increasing budgets for gender-related policies and to repair the inequalities that drag us down. Therefore, this 8M takes place in a special context: we have an enemy who is clearly going to try to take away our rights and that enemy is the International Monetary Fund. We have to debate debt in all its dimensions (its legitimacy, who is complicit at the local level, those who got rich and fled the country with that money, the everyday forms of blackmail that it entails) and not only on March 8, but until not a single IMF official is left in Argentina."

Excerpt from "Strike winds are blowing around the world," March 2022..

Translated by Liz Mason-Deese. <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/>



"care sustains the world, but suffocates the women's lives"

MARTA MALO

Thus read a feminist poster in Italy in the 1970s, expressing the (primarily) feminine experience of ambivalence with respect to care: power (*potencia*) and oppression occur *at the same time*, without one dimension contradicting or attenuating the other (1). Yes, care does *suffocate* the lives of women and all those who are primarily responsible for it. The reason is clear: these tasks are too much to do alone and too expensive in societies where girls, good or bad, can't get anywhere without money (nor can boys and don't even get me started on gender-queer and trans kids).

Those, mostly women, who do care work for free, have infinitely long working days, without vacations or the possibility of rest, or in a situation of dependency in relation to a husband or equivalent figure, or condemned to double and triple working days that are impossible to balance, with the exhaustion and constant juggling that that requires. They also deal with constant surveillance of everything they do and with guilt always lurking: for not making ends meet, for being "kept" (by husbands, lovers, fathers, the state), for never being sufficiently present, for not being good enough - in either "work" or the "household," or in the public arena -. Those who do paid care work, primarily migrants, work in one of the sectors with the worst labor conditions or subjected to special household employment regimes, in other words, without hardly any of the rights

recognized for other workers. With this panorama, it is difficult to idealize care.

But care is also power (*potencia*). Its practice allows us to recognize ourselves as fragile and interdependent beings who need others in order to sustain ourselves in this world. The fantasy of individuality (2) is revealed, from the perspective of care, as a sexist, colonial, predatory fiction. The mirage of the hero who stands in life through his own efforts, without anyone to support, cradle, and feed him, always healthy and clean, and that, through his own forces, plunders, conquers, and devastates all others to build upon that devastation is shattered when we look at what surrounds us through the eyes of those who care and the intertwined bonds of interdependence that sustain us. Instead, other creative stories appear that have a lot to do with that practice of bonding that is part of care: cooking, singing a lullaby, telling stories, transmitting a language, organizing and maintaining the spaces where we share life, watching over the dead, listening to sleeplessness, healing wounds are all activities that could not be considered unproductive, that go beyond the reproductive – that create and found, gesture by gesture, world and meaning.

What would happen if, instead of suffering from the suffocation of care, we were to draw on its power to create other worlds, if we were to experiment with other forms of the social organization of care and all human activity that are more focused on the irreversible horizon of our common vulnerability? Would it be possible to have a radical revolt based on care?

[...]

“Estamos para nosotras.” This was the one of the slogans of the feminist strike in Argentina (3). “Estamos para nosotras” indicates an interruption of feminized attention, that which is imposed by the mandate of being-for-others even at the cost of one’s own self, one’s own vital flow. More than an interruption, a diversion, a partial cut: we are not here for those who kills us, abuse, attack us, exploit us. We are not here to sacrifice ourselves, to deny our own being for the sake of Marianism that sanctifies us as women and wives (or spits on us like whores). And that does not mean that we are not there, that we fall into the me-in-arms of patriarchal masculine subjectivity, that we give ourselves over to the neoliberal project of the entrepreneur of the self that is only there for herself and her own selfie narcissism. No. “Estamos para nosotras” speaks of a common which we are there for: that which wants us alive and debt free. We are for those, who like ourselves, are willing to take responsibility for the fact that we-are-with-others: other people, old and young, but also animals, the oceans, the land. And even with the virus.

Here an image is activated of attention that is not given up unconditionally, but rather takes sides and produces other ways of being together. We need it so that we don’t drown. To not fall into the trap that tries to keep us enclosed or alone; enclosed and alone. To open up the set of care tasks, wrapped up in the home and in its neoliberal externalizations, and once again intertwine it with the fabric of rebel plots and cultures, with the defense of water and air, with caring for children and crops, with songs and seasons, with finiteness and laughter, with *buen*

vivir and *buen morir*. To make care a rigorous practice of the cultivation of the relationships that we do want, that we will take risks for.

(1) See “Cólera y ternura” in *Vínculos*, October 30, 2016.

<https://otrosvinculos.wordpress.com/2016/10/30/colera-y-ternura/>

(2) Almudena Hernando, *La fantasía de la individualidad. Sobre la construcción sociohistórica del sujeto moderno*, Madrid, Traficantes de Sueños, 2018.

(3) Natalia Fontana explains this marvellously in her intervention in La Laboratoria’s workshop “Tools for a feminist unionism. Labor and Rent” (July 13, 2020).

<https://youtu.be/g58rWGz3QQg>

Excerpt from the text “Estamos para Nosotras,” August 2020.

Translated by Liz Mason-Deese.



map your strike

COUNTER-CARTOGRAPHIES COLLECTIVE

Since 2017, March 8—International Working Women’s Day—has been commemorated by powerful transnational feminist strikes, inventing new practices and geographies of the strike, striking as much from (under)paid work as from unpaid domestic work, as from gender mandates that distribute labor and attempt to discipline us. In turn, the strike produced a time of encounter, for us to find each other and elaborate new ways of being together, weaving new alliances and connections between our different struggles.

Every year, compounding and interconnected crises bring a new set of difficulties to organizing and carrying out the feminist strike. We already know that the pandemic has hit women the hardest. Whether on the underpaid front lines in hospitals and health care centers, the education and service work deemed essential, or trapped in the domestic space due to quarantine measures and job loss, becoming full-time teachers, cooks, care-givers, women and feminized subjects have increasingly had to put our bodies on the line. In the process, we lost time for creating our own spaces of reflection and action, for organizing and thinking together. Now we are also juggling increasing inflation, child and elder care crises, employment crises (and so on and so forth), which we are once again left to bear the brunt of. And this is not even to mention the ecological crisis that threatens the very interdependence that make life possible and the added pressure on women and communities this entails.

So, how do we strike in this context?

We offer this mapping exercise as a way to start thinking about what (y)our strikes might look like. Do it alone or together, with groups of friends or compañeras, share the results with us (countercartographies@gmail.com) and each other, as you like. Draw directly on blank paper, make your own additions to a base map using stickers, icons, or collage. Make a time-use chart of how you spend time or another type of graphic representation of your life, work, and strike.

* **Map your daily life:** Where do you go? Where/when do you work? Paid work, unpaid, underpaid work. How is value extracted from your everyday life? When, and where, don't you work?

* **Map your networks:** What networks of care are you embedded in? Whose labor sustains your quarantine? Whose quarantine does your labor sustain?

* **What is your strike?** Looking at your map/diagram of all your labor, how will you strike? Where/when will you strike? What will you strike against, what will you strike for?

* **What would it take to make your strike possible?** We know we cannot strike alone. We know that the care work we do is vitally necessary, and yet, we must strike. Could you imagine a map of connections, support, the infrastructure, that would make your strike possible?



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#WESTRIKE BECAUSE
WE CARE

ON NEWSTRIKE
#WESTRIKE

10

SEVEN
FUNDERS

WEST
MIND
SETTER



ABAJÓ
EL

PATRIARCADO